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LETTER

A

LETTER

TO

[redacted] C——,

On his LETTER to Mr. P——.

Price Sixpence.

A LETTER

TO

MR. G—b—n,

[illegible] LETTER to Mr. P—,

A

LETTER

TO

Mr. C—b—r,

On his LETTER to

Mr. P---.

Tu ne cede malis sed contra audentior ito.

VIRG.

LONDON:

Printed for J. ROBERTS, near the *Oxford-Arms* in *Warwick-Lane*. MDCCXLII.

LETTER

TO

Mr. C——l;

On his LETTER to

Mr. P——.

BRITISH MUSEUM

43.
7. 6.
293.

In me crede modis doctorum Musa meorum.
VIRG.

LONDON:

Printed for J. ROBERTS, near the Oxford-Arms in Warwick-Lane. MDCCXLII.

SIR,

AS I look upon all Ingratitude to be the Sin against the Holy Ghost in Morality, and Morality to be the Corner-Stone of all Religion; so it is impossible for me, with a quiet Conscience, to omit telling you the infinite Pleasure I receiv'd from your most incomparable Letter to Mr. *Boyer*: for tho' I have often return'd you my warmest Thanks in my own Mind, yet as those who are truly pious cannot content themselves with domestic and private

Prayer without joining in the Forms of outward and publick Worship; ſo I thought it, from the Principles of true Gratitude, incumbent upon me, not only to pay you my mental and ſecret Thanks, but to make this publick Acknowledgment of the Senſe I have of your Merit, in Return for the Entertainment it gave me.

A

There is really ſomething ſo very uncommon in the Stile and Manner of your addreſſing yourſelf to Mr. *Pope* on this Occaſion; ſomething ſo *Cibberian* (if you will allow me to make uſe of that Expreſſion in Veneration, which has been ſo often apply'd in Deriſion) ſuch a happy *Noſtrum* peculiar to yourſelf throughout the whole Turn of this Performance, that I ſincerely think

the

the *curiosa Felicitas*, given by *Petronius* to *Horace*, may with equal Justice be ascrib'd to you. I do not mean by this to flatter you so far, as to intimate that you write as well in *English Prose*, as *Horace* in *Latin Verse*, but that you are to the full as *unimitating* and *inimitable*: And, in my Opinion, Mr. *Pope* and you together have shewn, you by your Attack, and he, by his poor, pitiful, paltry, piddling Answer, with a quibbling Title, and a silly Motto, that you are as much too hard for him in this War with *Pens*, as you cou'd have been in single Combat with a *Rod* or a *Cudgel*; and as much superior to him in Strength of Argument, as you wou'd have been in Strength of Body, if for his Porter's Language you had shew'd a Porter's Resent-

ment, taken a Porter's Revenge, and decided the Diſpute between you by Wreſtling or Boxing.

Having ſaid thus much in your Commendation, I muſt now tell you a little of your Faults, and let you know, that if your Deſign in the Publication of this Letter was not merely to ſhow your own Parts, but to vex Mr. *Pope*, I think you have miſs'd of your Aim; for as you attack nothing but his Morals, which no body defends; and allow him ſeveral poetical Merits, which many People diſpute, I firmly believe he will be much more pleas'd with that Part of your Letter which *commends* him, than he will be mortify'd with that which *condemns* him; and will be glad to pay the Tax of the one for the ſake of the

other: for as he is conscious of his Defects as a *Poet*, and convinc'd that no body is now ignorant of his Iniquities as a *Man*, I reckon he will look upon your Letter just as *Chartres* wou'd have done on the Pleading of some able Lawyer, who at the same time that he was calling *Chartres* Rogue and Villain, and Rascal and Scoundrel, and giving him all the coarse, foul Language that any Bargeman ever utter'd by Water, or any Carman or *Pope* himself ever evacuated by Land, did admit Mr. *Chartres*'s disputable Title to some litigated Land or Money; and show, tho' he deserved to be hang'd for a thousand different and aspirated Crimes as a Member of Society, that no equitable Judge cou'd decide this Case of Property against him.

And

wanting these two fundamental Qualifications for a Writer and a Poet, can, in my Opinion, lay no just Claim to either of these Appellations. Notwithstanding therefore all his Labour and Sweat, though, according to the Description in *Horace*,

Sæpe stilum vertit—& in versu faciendo
Sæpe caput scaberet, vivos & roderet ungues;

tho' he may twirl his Pen till it is dry, scratch his costive Pate, and bite his dirty Nails to the quick, whilst his *Mountain-Brain* is in Labour of such Productions as his late *Mouse-Satires* and *Epistles*; such Productions wanting *Invention* in the *Foundation*, and *Perspicuity* in the *Execution*, deserve the Name of a *Poem* just as much as the green

Dab

Dab made up by your Cook with Spinage and Sorrel, and Shreds of Orange and Biſcuit, and twenty other Ingredients, deſerves the Name of a *Tanſy*, when there is not a Leaf of *Tanſy* in it. His *Dunciad*, you, for the Reaſons aforeſaid I ſuppoſe, admit to be one of the beſt Poems of the Kind that ever was written; and yet the want of Perſpicuity here is ſo notorious, that I am ſure you muſt honour it in many Places, as Sir *Thomas Callico* does the Sound of *Latin* without underſtanding a Syllable of it; and indeed there is no one Article you can name, in which it is not ſo obſcure, that, according to *Milton*'s Phraſe, it is *a Darkneſs to be felt* in ev'ry *Line* by ev'ry *Reader*. The *Plan* is obſcure, the *Grammar* is obſcure, the *Senſe* is obſcure, the

Stories are obſcure, the *Alluſions* are obſcure, and the *Characters* are ſo obſcure, that the Perſons of the *Satirized* are as obſcure as the Stile of the *Satiriſt*. Which made me admire extremely a little Epigram I ſaw in a Viſit written on the Title-Page of this Poem when it firſt came out, that at once did Juſtice to Mr. *Pope* as a Tranſlator, and as an Author. The Epigram was this:

Whilſt in thy Verſe we hear old Homer *ſpeak,*
And in thy Dunciad *thy own Meaning ſeek,*
His Greek *grows* Engliſh, *and thy* Engliſh Greek.

And as to Mr. *Pope*'s Invention in this, and all his other Satires; tho' I grant

I grant there is as much as is necessary to make a *great Liar*, yet I protest I do not see the least Glympse of that sort which is necessary to make a *great Poet*; consequently the Perjuries of one of the Hackney-Swearers at the *Custom-House* might just as well be given in Evidence, to prove the Fertility of such a Fellow's Imagination, as all Mr. *Pope*'s Ribaldry, Scandal, Calumny and Falshoods, pass for Flights of Fancy, or the Luxuriancy of a poetical Genius.

To all his *Strokes of Satire*, as he impudently and proudly calls them, and you civilly and ignorantly allow his squab Abuse to be, I have just the same sort of Objection that I have to what he may stile *Invention*; because I can no more look upon

on course Language to be true Satire, than I can rank gross Lies under the Head of poetic Fiction. And as all his Manner of Satirizing consists in Scurrility, and calling Names, I can no more admit that Mr. *Pope* has any Merit in this sort of Writing, or deserves the Title of a Satirist; than if I heard a drunken Scold of an Apple-woman quarrelling with a foul-mouth'd Hackney-Coachman, I should think in my next Visit of describing what had pass'd, by saying, I had seen at the Corner of the Street coming thither, two of the *keenest Satirists* I had ever met with in my Life.

Mr. *Pope* was certainly once so good a Versificator, that his Predecessor Mr. *Dryden*, and his Cotemporary Mr. *Prior* excepted, I think

the Harmony of his Numbers equal to any body's; and when other People thought for him (that is, when he was a Tranſlator) he had all the Merit that a Man can have in the Execution of a Task where Genius is not neceſſary, and to which no Man of true Genius can, or will ſubmit. Nor will the fineſt Verſification, the moſt flowing Numbers, the beſt choſen and beſt ſorted Words, without any other Merit, make a fine Poem, any more than the beſt choſen and beſt made Apparel will make a fine Woman; the one will ornament and heighten Senſe, as the other will decorate and become Beauty; but tho' each can aid, neither can create; and as Genius and Beauty are Gifts, not Arts, ſo the moſt perfect Verſificator, without one of theſe Gifts, will

no more from the mechanic Part of Poetry come out a Poet, than the genteelest dress'd Woman without the other will appear handsome.

But even this Merit of Versification (the single one he ever possels'd in Poetry) and which at best is nothing more than the Shoemaker to good Sense by helping it to run well, Mr. *Pope* in his late Epistles, and what he calls Satires, has either from Age and Rust entirely lost, or from an Affectation of the *sermo pedestris* chosen to abdicate. Which puts me in mind of a former silly Friend and old Acquaintance of yours, poor Mrs. *Booth*, who hating to do what she did tolerably well, and loving to do what she did intolerably ill, always chose to act and be hiss'd, rather than to dance and

be

be applauded; and by an ill-understood Pursuit of Fame, thus equally lost the Admirers he coveted, by what she *did* and *did not* do; till she upon the Stage, and *Pope* in the Press, might say from the Liturgy, *We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no Judgment in us.*

Another Proof of Mr. *Pope's* Want of *Judgment*, as well as *Invention*, and that he himself understands *the best* of his late Writings no more than his Readers can understand *the worst*, is his *Essay upon Man*; in which, resolving to turn *Philosopher*, he has, in order to fit himself for the Execution of that Task, read every speculative

Book

Book upon the Subject he treats; and whenever a Paſſage happen'd to ſtrike him in any of theſe different Authors, writing upon different Principles, tho' on the ſame Subject, and conſequently maintaining different Opinions, and exhibiting different Sentiments, he has put them into moſt *harmonious Verſe*, I confeſs, but ſuch *diſcordant Senſe*, that he has jumbled together my L^d *Shaftsbury*, *Montagne*, Lord *Herbert*, *Mandeville*, and fifty *& cæteras*; till from theſe fine uniform Originals drawing only ſome incongruous Scraps, his whole Work is nothing but a Heap of poetical Contradictions, and a jarring Series of Doctrines, Principles, Opinions and Sentiments, diametrically oppoſite to each other; making together juſt ſuch an *Ollio*, *Hodge-Podge*

Podge Mess of Philosophy, as one of *Cloe*'s best Dinners would make of *Food*, if you took his four Courses, and his hundred and fifty well-dress'd, well-tasted Dishes, and mix'd them all up together in one great Cauldron, with all their different Seasonings and Sauces; and thinking there could never be too many, or too much of good Things, seized the Butler's Charge, and the Confectioner's Art, the Furniture of the Side-board, and all the Ingredients of the Desert, and threw them into the Bargain amongst the rest; and then christen'd the whole, *An Essay upon Cookery and good Eating.*

Let us then draw a fair Parallel between Mr. *Pope*'s Character, and Your's; let us impartially weigh

your

your reſpective Qualifications and Merits, and ſee whoſe Scale will preponderate. Neither of you I ſuppoſe pique yourſelves much upon your Extraction, and both of you came into the World to make that Fortune you were not born to. You choſe to be an Actor on the Stage, he a Performer in the Preſs. You wrote Plays for Fame and Money, he wrote Poems from the ſame Motives: And ſince you are allow'd to have produc'd one of the beſt Comedies in our Language, let him, to match this Merit, produce any Work of his, that can claim the ſame Praiſe. When you ſpoke the Senſe and Thoughts of other People, you always ſucceeded as a *Player*. When he wrote the Senſe and Thoughts of other People, he always ſucceeded as a *Tranſlator*.

Here indeed your Merits were equal. But whereas you in whatever Character you put on have always been lik'd and applauded; his Fate has been just the Reverse; for whenever he has endeavour'd to personate that of *Benevolence*, *Disinterestedness*, *Humanity* or *Virtue*, he has play'd them so ill, they have sat so awkardly upon him, and the Mimickry has been so coarse, that all his Attempts have been constantly exploded, the Cheat seen through, and the wretched Actor despised. And as the worst that can be said of you is, that you squandered away your Money as fast as you got it; the best that can be said of him is, that he constantly robs, cheats, and plunders the Publick within the Limits of the Law, by selling the same Work over and over again un-

der the Pretence of correcting, altering, and adding here and there a Word, in *Folios*, *Quarto's*, *Octavo's*, *Duodecimo's*, *Loose Sheets*, *collected Volumes*, and all the *Proteus-Shapes* which the *Press* can furnish.

Your Converſation is always flowing and eaſy; his affected and conſtrain'd. You always talking in the Character for which *Nature* deſigned you; he in That, which in Spite of *Nature*, he deſigned himſelf for, and is conſtantly labouring to obtain, and keep up by *Art*; till his poor tortur'd Imagination, perpetually on the Stretch to act the Wit, the Refiner, and the Humoriſt, yields Maxims, Sentences, Obſervations and Sentiments, juſt as poor Wretches upon the Rack make Confeſſions, and extorts every Word

from himſelf, as every Word of theirs is extorted by other People. By theſe means, whilſt you in all the Warmth of chearful ſocial Connections are trying to amuſe and entertain the People you are with; he is only endeavouring to tax their Admiration, and excite their Flattery: And whilſt you are gaily and laughingly contributing to their Mirth and their Pleaſure, he is cooly and deliberately meditating how in his next Performance he may damp both by ridiculing, vexing, and aſperſing ev'ry one who has the Misfortune of being known to him, or whoſe Name, by being introduced into his *Rhime-Libels*, he thinks will enhance their Price or multiply their Sale; at once to gratify his two predominant Senſations and Paſſions *Malevolence* and *Avarice*. No

Wonder then whilſt you are ſought and introduced into Society, he is ſhunn'd and excluded from it: that whilſt you are heard and lik'd, he is only read and fear'd; read from from Curioſity, and fear'd from the Apprehenſion Self-love has of incurring and ſharing, that which human Envy and Malice perhaps may not diſlike whilſt it is confin'd to others, and only mortifies their Friends and calumniates their Acquaintance. It is for this Reaſon only, perhaps, that thoſe who will never admit him, buy him; and reſolve never to ſee him but thro' the Medium of the Preſs; as People look at the Sun thro' ſmoak'd Glaſſes for Fear of paying too dear for their Curioſity if they ſhould venture the Interview any other way, and meet with ſome laſting Hurt

where they fought only a little temporary Pleasure. This being at present his and your Situation in the World; whilst you have the Satisfaction of passing the Close of your Life in all the social Enjoyments that Period will allow; he like enervated deposed Tyrants will drag the Remnant of his, in the continued unpitied Solitude which always does and ought to attend those who have lost such Power, as only made them courted or frequented through Fear whilst they possess'd it.

This being the Case between you, I wonder what Fool would hesitate one Moment in his Choice, if he was ask'd which he wou'd be *Cibber* or *Pope*?

Upon

Upon the whole I look upon Mr. *Pope*, for the Reasons I have before given of his wanting *Clearness* and *Imagination*, to be much overrated as an Author either in Prose or Verse; and tho' he is a *good Translator*, and has been a good Versificator, he has no more Pretence from these Merits to be call'd a *fine Poet*, than a *good Copyist* has to be call'd a *fine Painter*.

And as to his Love of *Virtue*, which he so often brags of, I take him to be just such a Lover of *Virtue*, as a haughty, malevolent, hypocritical *Priest* is of *Religion*; who wou'd bribe any body that did not follow the Rules and Doctrines he lays down and recommends, tho' he neither believes nor practises one

of

of them himself; and is glad of so plausible a Pretence to plague and persecute every Man, whom his *Pride* likes to *oppress*, his *Envy* to *lower*, or his *Malevolence* to *wound*.

The sort of Virtue Mr. *Pope* really admires, and is a Friend to, may be known by the *Hero* he has chosen for a Sample of it: An Object of his Panegyrick, which I cou'd never account for his chusing any other way, than by concluding he did it from such an Aversion to doing any Mortal any good, that he wou'd never praise or commend any Man, but such a one whose Character was so stigmatiz'd and lost, that no Praises or Commendations cou'd be of any Use or Advantage to him.

And

And when Mr. *Pope* professes a *Love to Mankind in general*, whilst he is treating *every Individual in detail* in the manner he does, I give his Professions just the same Credit that I give to the Professions of any old, fowre, tyrannical Fellow, who calls himself *a Patriot*, pretends to love his *Country*, and with the Welfare of his *Fellow-Citizens*, at the same time that he beats his Wife, scolds his Children, starves his Servants, cheats his Tradesmen, abuses his Acquaintance, and screws up his Tenants till they break.

I think him therefore at best *a second-rate Poet*, a *bad Companion*, a *dangerous Acquaintance*, an *inveterate, implacable Enemy*, *no body's Friend*, a *noxious Member of Society*, and *a thorough bad Man*.

I have nothing further to add, than that you should have had my Thanks for the Justice you have done to Mr. Pope's Morals, and my Reprehension for the Partiality you have shown to his Writings, much sooner, if I was not at present at such a Distance from *London*, as made it impossible; and must beg of you, if you should think fit to give yourself the Trouble of commenting on his Works any more, that you would take these two things of his own for your Text:

Pains, Reading, Study are their just Pretence;
And all they want is Spirit, Taste, and Sense.

I am, dear SIR,

With the greatest Gratitude and Truth,

most affectionately yours.

BRITISH MUSEUM